

Summary of State Responses

America's reaction to the tragic events of September 11th, 2001 demonstrated our nation's unity and resolve. The partnerships forged that late summer day, and each day since, are the foundation for the country's unprecedented response. State and local governments from across the nation lent their professional first-responders and other precious resources to aid communities impacted by the New York, Pentagon and Pennsylvania attacks. The lesson learned was that neither federal, nor state, nor local governments alone could match the power of partnerships.

From deploying National Guard troops in the defense of key facilities and infrastructure, to passing comprehensive anti-terror legislative packages, to implementing state plans to address bio-terror threats, the states have been tremendous partners in securing the homeland. The summaries that follow outline many—but not all—of the state actions taking place across the nation.

Washington, D.C. and the U.S. territories, too, are partners with the federal government and the states in the fight against terrorism. This document includes submissions from the District of Columbia and the territories of Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and American Samoa that outline their unique challenges and post-September 11th activities.

Developing Plans

There are more than 20,000 cities and counties in the United States, and thousands of other local jurisdictions. With this in mind, it is evident that states must assume a key role in bridging federal and local efforts. The events of September 11th necessitated a new approach to homeland security in America. Competition that once existed between state and local governments for federal funding is now being replaced by homeland security partnerships. To that end, under the President's proposals for homeland security funding, states will ensure that cities, counties and other municipal governments are included in the development and implementation of comprehensive state homeland security plans.

Many states have already begun to develop these partnerships, centered on the concept of mutual aid. The State of Florida, for example, has created regionally-based Domestic Security Task Forces to bring together state officials, local officials, law enforcement, fire and emergency services and other first-responders to support integrated planning efforts, to engage in regular exercises, and to improve communication at all levels. Additionally, Illinois has held 16 regional training seminars to update first-responders on state response plans.

Information Sharing

Timely and relevant information is one of the most valuable resources needed to secure the homeland. Effective and regular communication must exist to sustain essential partnerships. The Office of Homeland Security (OHS) has appreciated state efforts to enhance information sharing. State/territorial homeland security advisors have participated on regular OHS conference calls. The calls, organized by Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) regions, have been supplemented by several face-to-face meetings where state needs and best practices have been discussed, and frank input for the national strategy has been received.

Meanwhile, states have moved to improve communication within their borders. Tennessee, for example, has hosted conference calls with local leaders, providing access to federal officials including FEMA Director Joe Allbaugh. By bringing together state and local leaders, law enforcement, emergency services and health officials, Washington State utilizes its Emergency Management Council to address homeland

security issues. The State of New York sends out regular e-mail advisories to local law enforcement and homeland security partners to share important information. Further, many states are working toward standardizing first-responder communication systems.

During recent pipe bomb incidents in the Midwest, state homeland security advisors, in conjunction with the Office of Homeland Security Coordination Center, ensured real-time information sharing by officials at all levels. Further, states supplied the Coordination Center with information for tracking more than 2,000 major events over the July Fourth holiday period.

Once relevant information is shared, there must be an effective way for potential threats and a response to those threats to be broadly communicated to state and local officials, law enforcement, fire/EMS professionals, health care providers, the private sector and the general public. The Homeland Security Advisory System provides such a framework and states have taken the opportunity to build into this system. Many states post current homeland security advisory system information on their websites. Utah, for example, has developed specific government, private sector and public responses to the various levels of the Homeland Security Advisory System. This initiative will help citizens understand how they should respond to a change in the system.

Responding to Biological Threats

The anthrax incidents in the fall of 2001 demonstrated the potential for biological strikes against the nation.

In January, President Bush signed a supplemental appropriation that provided over \$1 billion to strengthen state bio-terrorism capabilities. The states developed detailed plans to utilize the Department of Health and Human Services funding, but there are other examples of how states are working to prevent or respond to the threat of bio-terrorism.

The State of North Carolina has established a registry of biological and chemical agents, while a number of states have established systems for real-time surveillance of public health data.

In Kansas, over 100 counties participated in the “Prairie Plague” bio-terror drill. It was the largest, most inclusive bio-defense exercise in state history. Similarly, Oklahoma’s “Sooner Spring” exercise serves as another example of what states across the nation are doing to train and prepare for the potential of biological attacks.

Protecting Critical Infrastructure

Highways, power plants, dams, water treatment facilities, and pipelines are some of the critical infrastructure assets that states have moved to protect since September 11th. Pennsylvania, for example, has committed National Guard troops to stand watch at the state’s nuclear power facilities.

Critical infrastructure assessments by the states have been a major component of these efforts. For example, in Texas, a State Infrastructure Protection Advisory Committee was formed to conduct reviews and to make protective recommendations that complement the counter-terrorism efforts of the Governor’s Task Force on Homeland Security. Missouri has developed a similar panel to oversee vulnerability assessments for the purpose of establishing state priorities.

With these assessments in hand, and with the collection of relevant information from law enforcement and other government agencies, state leaders are in a position to make decisions about infrastructure protection.

Conclusion

States are exercising leadership on a multitude of homeland security issues. The National Governors' Association, Council of State Governments, National Conference of State Legislatures, American Legislative Exchange Council, National Association of Attorneys General and numerous other intergovernmental organizations have committed themselves to address the critical and complex issues facing state executive and legislative officials. The Bush Administration will continue to ensure that partnership at all levels remains the hallmark of America's effort to secure the homeland and protect our citizens.